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ABSTRACT

In spring 1988, Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC), in Palos Hills, Illinois, implemented "College Success," a course to increase student academic performance and improve college retention. Students in the course learned a variety of techniques to help them succeed in college, including note-taking skills, time management, memory techniques, listening and test-taking skills. In fall 1988, 73 students were enrolled in College Success. A study was conducted to compare their average grade point average (GPA) and return rate with those of a random sample of students who were similar in terms of gender, age, and full-/part-time status, and with all fall 1988 MVCC students. Study findings included the following: (1) 81% of the College Success student were enrolled in a transfer program, compared to 43% of the MVCC student population as a whole; (2) females and full-time students were also overrepresented in the College Success group; (3) there were no significant differences between the placement test scores of College Success students and the control group; (4) College Success students in general had slightly higher GPA's than the control group, while College Success students in the transfer program had a significantly higher GPA than the control group; (5) College Success students had a significantly higher return rate than the control group; and (6) a significantly higher proportion of College Success students were first-time students at MVCC. (MAB)

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College Success Course, Fall 1988

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May 1989

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May 1989

RE: College Success Course - Fall 1988

Moraine Valley's College Success course (Psychology 100-Human Potentials) was designed to increase academic performance and improve college retention. This course was first team-taught in the spring semester 1988.

Students in the College Success class learn a variety of techniques to help them succeed in college. Note taking skills, time management, memory techniques, listening skills and test preparation are some of the techniques taught in this class. In addition to study techniques, other issues which may impair college success are discussed. Some of these issues include the following: drug abuse, relationships, attitude changes, creativity, assertiveness, overcoming boredom, and setting priorities and goals.

In the fall semester 1988 there were five sections of the College Success class, with a total of 73 students. The following report compares the average GPA and the return rate of the College Success students to a random sample of similar students, and to all fall 1988 Moraine Valley students. A future report will examine retention rates over several terms and graduation rates.

Student Characteristics

For this study, the Research Office selected a random sample of fall 1988 students to be used as a control group. The control group was selected to match the College Success students on the following characteristics: Moraine Valley program, gender, full- or part-time status and age. Table 1 shows a summary of the student characteristics.

As shown in Table 1, the chosen characteristics of the control group are the same as that of the College Success students. Eighty-one percent of the College Success students (and the control group) were transfer program students; 10 percent were business career program students, and 10 percent were public service program students. The percent of female students (62 percent), male students (38 percent), and the percent of students who were full-time (70 percent) and part-time (30 percent), was the same for the College Success students and the control group.

There were no significant differences in age between the College Success students and the control group. After the control group

sample was drawn, the ethnic status of each group was examined; no significant differences in ethnic status were found.

The course work of each group was also examined by comparing a random sample of transcripts. The proportion of social/behavioral sciences, humanities, math and science courses was similar for the College Success students and the control group. The College Success students had, however, a somewhat higher percentage of 100 level courses than the control group.

Table 1

Summary of Student Characteristics

Characteristic	College Success Students	Fall 88 Control Group	All Fall 88 Students
Total	73	1,147	12,914
Moraine Valley Program			
Transfer	81%	81%	43%
Career:			
Business	10%	10%	22%
Public Service	10%	10%	9%
Allied Hlth & Nursing	-	-	3%
Industrial Tech.	-	-	8%
Other	-	-	16%
Gender			
Female	62%	62%	56%
Male	38%	38%	44%
Status			
Full-time	70%	70%	34%
Part-time	30%	30%	66%
Age			
Average Age	20.3	20.7	26
Median Age	18	19	22

Also shown in Table 1 are the characteristics of all fall 1988 Moraine Valley students. A comparison of College Success students to all Moraine Valley students reveals that the College Success students were more likely to be in a transfer program, were more likely to be female, were more likely to be full-time and were younger than the average Moraine Valley student.

The percentage of College Success students in a transfer program (81 percent) is almost twice that of the typical Moraine Valley student (43 percent). Ten percent of the College Success students are in a business career program, compared to 22 percent of all Moraine Valley students. There were no College Success students in allied health and nursing, industrial technology or "other" (vocational skills, remedial, adult basic education, adult secondary education) programs. This compares to the figures for all Moraine Valley students of 3 percent, 8 percent, and 16 percent respectively.

The percentage of College Success students who are female (62 percent) is higher than Moraine Valley students overall (56 percent). The percentage of College Success students who are full time (70 percent) is more than twice that of Moraine Valley students overall (34 percent). The average age of the College Success students is about 5 years younger than Moraine Valley students overall.

Placement Test Score Comparisons

ASSET placement test scores were available for 49 of the College Success students and 459 of the control group students. The average test scores for the four tests (reading, language usage, numerical skills, and elementary algebra) were compared. In addition, average combined scores (reading and language usage, and numerical skills and elementary algebra) were also compared. In all cases, the average test scores for College Success students were slightly lower than for the control group. This difference, however, was not statistically significant. That is, the academic skills measured by the ASSET tests were about the same for both groups.

While the available data showed no significant difference in assessment scores between the two groups, it should be noted that assessment test scores were not available for all students. Thirty-three percent of the College Success students and 60 percent of the control group did not have assessment test scores.

GPA Comparisons

Table 2 shows the average fall semester GPA for the College Success students, the control group and all fall 1988 Moraine Valley students. The average semester GPA for the College Success students (2.54) was considerably higher than the average GPA for all fall Moraine Valley students (2.06).

The average semester GPA for all Moraine Valley students included a large number (N=3,575) of students with a semester GPA of 0.00. Students who were enrolled solely in vocational skills courses, students who were enrolled solely in courses numbered under 100, students who received only grades of incomplete or pass, and of course, students who failed all classes, all have a semester GPA of 0.00. Since Moraine Valley students overall are more likely to be part-time students, and are more likely to be enrolled in vocational skills and remedial programs, it is not surprising that the GPA for Moraine Valley students overall is lower than that of the College Success students.

A comparison of the College Success student's semester GPA (2.54) to the control group's semester GPA (2.32) reveals a higher GPA for College Success students. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

When the College Success students and the control group were analyzed by program, a significant difference was found for transfer program students but not for career program students. College Success students in a transfer program had a higher GPA (2.59) than students in the control group (2.29). This difference was statistically significant. College Success students in career programs had a slightly lower GPA (2.36) than control group students (2.45). The number of College Success students in career programs was small, however, and this difference was not statistically significant.

Table 2

Grade Point Average Comparisons

	College Success		Control Group		
Program	N	Average Fall 88 GPA	N	Average Fall 88 GPA	All Fall 88 Students
Transfer Program Students	59	2.59*	864	2.29*	
Career Program Students	14	2.36	210	2.45	
All Students	73	2.54	1,074	2.32	2.06

* Significant difference

The average number of credit hours earned in the fall semester was approximately the same for both the College Success students and the control group, about 9 hours.

Return Rate Comparisons

The fall to spring return rate is the percentage of students who were registered in fall 1988 who also registered for spring 1989, excluding graduates. For example, if there were 1,000 students in the fall and 700 returned in the spring and 100 graduated, then the return rate would be 700/900 = 78%. Since full-time, degree-seeking students typically have a higher return rate than part-time, non-degree seeking students, it was expected that the College Success students and the control group would both have a higher return rate than Moraine Valley students overall. As shown in Table 3, the return rate for the College Success students (85 percent) and the control group (72 percent) was considerably higher than that of all Moraine Valley students (60 percent).

Comparing the return rate of the College Success students and the control group, a significant difference was found. Eighty-five percent of the College Success students returned in spring 1989, compared to 72 percent for the control group. This difference in return rates was statistically significant.

Table 3

Return Rate Comparisons

	College Success		Control Group		
Program	N	Percent Returning Spr 89	N	Percent Returning Spr 89	All Fall 88 Students
Transfer Program Students	59	86%*	907	73%*	
Career Program Students	14	79%	214	68%	
All Students	73	85%*	1,121	72%*	60%

*Significant difference.

Comparing the College Success students and the control group by Moraine Valley program, a significant difference was found for transfer program students, but not for career program students. Eighty-six percent of the College Success transfer program students returned to Moraine Valley in spring 1989, compared to 73 percent for the control group. This difference was statistically significant. A higher percentage of College Success career program students (79 percent) returned in spring 1989 than the control group (68 percent). The number of College Success students in career programs was small, however, and this difference was not statistically significant.

First-Time Student Status Comparison

A comparison was made of the percentage of students in each group who were first-time students at Moraine Valley. Sixty-five percent of the College Success students were first-time students at Moraine Valley, compared to 46 percent of the control group. This difference was statistically significant. That is, the control group students had significantly more Moraine Valley college experience than the College Success students. It might be expected that a higher degree of prior Moraine Valley experience would lead to a higher return rate; however, this did not occur.

Summary

Seventy-three students were registered for the College Success class (Psychology 100-Human Potentials) in the fall semester 1988. These students were compared to a random sample of similar students, and to all fall 1988 Moraine Valley students.

- A comparison of the College Success students to all Moraine Valley students showed that the College Success students had a higher percentage of students in a transfer program, a higher percentage of female students, a higher percentage of full-time students and a higher percentage of younger students, than Moraine Valley students overall.

- Placement test score comparisons showed no significant differences between the College Success students and the control group.

- GPA comparisons showed that the College Success students overall had a slightly higher GPA than the control group. College Success students in a transfer program had a significantly higher GPA than the control group.

- Return rate comparisons showed that College Success students overall had a significantly higher return rate than the control group.

- First-time student comparisons showed that a significantly higher percentage of College Success students were first-time students at Moraine Valley.

This report compared the demographic characteristics, average semester GPA and return rates of all College Success students and a control group. A future report will examine retention rates over several terms and graduation rates. In addition to matching College Success students and a control group by program, gender and age, future analyses will include only first-time, full-time students.

BR